

On the fatal seventh of September a certain Secret Service man sat in the President's chair and—looked back into the Eye of Allah.

Blinky Collins' part in this matter was very brief. Blinky lasted just long enough to make a great discovery, to brag about it as was Blinky's way, and then pass on to find his reward in whatever hereafter is set apart for weak-minded crooks whose heads are not hard enough to withstand the crushing impact of a lead-filled pacifier.

The photograph studio of Blinky Collins was on the third floor of a disreputable building in an equally unsavory part of Chicago. There were no tinted pictures of beautiful blondes nor of stern, square-jawed men of affairs in Blinky's reception room. His clients, who came furtively there, were strongly opposed to having their pictures taken—they came for other purposes. For the photographic work of Mr. Collins was strictly commercial—and peculiar. There were fingerprints to be photographed and identified for purpose of private revenge, photographs of people

to be merged and repictured in compromising closeness for reasons of blackmail. And even X-Ray photography was included in the scope of his work.

The great discovery came when a box was brought to the dingy room and Mr. Collins was asked to show what was inside it without the bother and inconvenience of disturbing lock and seals. The X-Ray machine sizzled above it, and a photographic plate below was developed to show a string of round discs that could easily have been pearls.

The temporary possessor of the box was pleased with the result—but Blinky was puzzled. For the developer had brought out an odd result. There were the pearls as expected, but, too, there was a small picture superimposed—a picture of a bald head and a body beneath seated beside a desk. The picture had been taken from above looking straight down, and head and desk were familiar.

Blinky knew them both. The odd part was that he knew also that both of them were at that instant on

the ground floor of the same disreputable building, directly under and two floors below his workshop.

Like many great discoveries, this of Blinky's came as the result of an accident. He had monkeyed with the X-Ray generator and had made certain substitutions. And here was the result—a bald head and a desk, photographed plainly through two heavy wood floors. Blinky scratched his own head in deep thought. And then he repeated the operation.

This time there was a blonde head close to the bald one, and two people were close to the desk and to each other. Blinky knew then that there were financial possibilities in this new line of portrait work.

It was some time before the rat eyes of the inventor were able to see exactly what they wanted through this strange device, but Blinky learned. And he fitted a telescope back of the ray and found that he could look along it and see as if through a great funnel what was transpiring blocks and blocks away; he looked where he would, and brick walls or stone were like glass when the new ray struck through them.

Blinky never knew what he had—never dreamed of the tremendous potentialities in his oscillating ethereal ray that had a range and penetration beyond anything known. But he knew, in a vague way, that this ray was a channel for light waves to follow, and he learned that he could vary the range of the ray and that whatever light was shown at the end of that range came to him as clear and distinct as if he were there in the room.

He sat for hours, staring through the telescope. He would train the device upon a building across the street, then cut down the current until the unseen vibration penetrated inside the building. If there was nothing there of interest he would gradually increase the power, and the ray would extend out and still out into other rooms and beyond them to still others. Blinky had a lot of fun, but he never forgot the practical application of the device—practical, that is, from the distorted viewpoint of a warped mind.

“I’ve heard about your machine,” said a pasty-faced man one day, as he sat in Blinky’s room, “and I think

it's a lot of hooey. But I'd give just one grand to know who is with the district attorney this minute."

"Where is he?" asked Blinky.

"Two blocks down the street, in the station house ... and if Pokey Barnard is with him, the lousy stool-pigeon—"

Blinky paid no attention to the other's opinion of one Pokey Barnard; he was busy with a sputtering blue light and a telescope behind a shield of heavy lead.

"Put your money on the table," he said, finally:  
"there's the dicks ... and there's Pokey. Take a look—"

It was some few minutes later that Blinky learned of another valuable feature in his ray. He was watching the district attorney when the pasty-faced man brushed against a hanging incandescent light. There was a bit of bare wire exposed, and as it swung into the ray the fuses in the Collins studio blew out instantly.

But the squinting eyes at the telescope had seen something first. They had seen the spare form of the district attorney throw itself from the chair as if it had been dealt a blow—or had received an electric shock.

Blinky put in new fuses—heavier ones—and tried it again on another subject. And again the man at the receiving end got a shot of current that sent him sprawling.

“Now what the devil—” demanded Blinky. He stood off and looked at the machine, the wire with its 110 volts, the invisible ray that was streaming out.

“It’s insulated, the machine is,” he told his caller, “so the juice won’t shoot back if I keep my hands off; but why,” he demanded profanely, “don’t it short on the first thing it touches?”

He was picturing vaguely a ray like a big insulated cable, with light and current both traveling along a core at its center, cut off, insulated by the ray, so that only the bare end where the ray stopped could make contact.

“Some more of them damn electrons.” he hazarded; then demanded of his caller: “But am I one hell of a smart guy? Or am I?”

There was no denying this fact. The pasty-faced man told Blinky with lurid emphasis just how smart. He had seen with his own eyes and this was too good to keep.

He paid his one grand and departed, first to make certain necessary arrangements for the untimely end of one Pokey Barnard, squealer, louse, et cetera, et cetera, and then to spread the glad news through the underworld of Collins’ invention.

That was Blinky’s big mistake, as was shown a few days later. Not many had taken seriously the account of the photographer’s experiments, but there was one who had, as was evident. A bearded man, whose eyes stared somewhat wildly from beneath a shock of frowzy hair, entered the Collins work-room and locked the door behind him. His English was imperfect, but the heavy automatic in his hand could not be misunderstood. He forced the trembling inventor to

give a demonstration, and the visitor's face showed every evidence of delight.

"The cur-rent," he demanded with careful words, "the electreek cur-rent, you shall do also. Yes?"

Again the automatic brought quick assent, and again the visitor showed his complete satisfaction. Showed it by slugging the inventor quietly and efficiently and packing the apparatus in the big suitcase he had brought.

Blinky Collins had been fond of that machine. He had found a form of television with uncounted possibilities, and it had been for him the perfect instrument of a blackmailing Peeping Tom; he had learned the secret of directed wireless transmission of power and had seen it as a means for annoying his enemies. Yet Blinky Collins—the late Blinky Collins—offered no least objection, when the bearded man walked off with the machine. His body, sprawled awkwardly in the corner, was quite dead....



And now, some two months later, in his Washington office, the Chief of the United States Secret Service pushed a paper across his desk to a waiting man and leaned back in his chair.

“What would you make of that, Del?” he asked.

Robert Delamater reached leisurely for the paper. He regarded it with sleepy, half-closed eyes.

There was a crude drawing of an eye at the top. Below was printed—not written—a message in careful, precise letters: “Take warning. The Eye of Allah is upon you. You shall instructions receive from time to time. Follow them. Obey.”

Delamater laughed. “Why ask me what I think of a nut letter like that. You’ve had plenty of them just as crazy.”

“This didn’t come to me,” said the Chief; “it was addressed to the President of the United States.”

“Well, there will be others, and we will run the poor sap down. Nothing out of the ordinary I should say.”

“That is what I thought—at first. Read this—” The big, heavy-set man pushed another and similar paper across the desk. “This one was addressed to the Secretary of State.”

Delamater did not read it at once. He held both papers to the light; his fingers touched the edges only.

“No watermark,” he mused; “ordinary white writing stock—sold in all the five and ten cent stores. Tried these for fingerprints I suppose?”.

“Read it,” suggested the Chief.

“Another picture of an eye,” said Delamater aloud, and read: “‘Warning. You are dealing with an emissary from a foreign power who is an unfriend of my country. See him no more. This is the first and last warning. The Eye of Allah watches.’”

“And what is this below—? ‘He did not care for your cigars, Mr. Secretary. Next time—but there must be no next time.’”

Delamater read slowly—lazily. He seemed only slightly interested except when he came to the odd conclusion of the note. But the Chief knew Delamater and knew how that slow indolence could give place to a feverish, alert concentration when work was to be done.

“Crazy as a loon,” was the man’s conclusion as he dropped the papers upon the desk.

“Crazy,” his chief corrected, “like a fox! Read the last line again; then get this—

“The Secretary of State *is* meeting with a foreign agent who is here very much incog. Came in as a servant of a real ambassador. Slipped quietly into Washington, and not a soul knew he was here. He met the Secretary in a closed room; no one saw him come or leave—”;

“Well, the Secretary tells me that in that room where nobody could see he offered this man a cigar. His visitor took it, tried to smoke it, apologized—and lit one of his own vile cigarettes.”

“Hm-m!” Delamater sat a little straighter in his chair; his eyebrows were raised now in questioning astonishment. “Dictaphone? Some employee of the Department listening in?”

“Impossible.”

“Now that begins to be interesting,” the other conceded. His eyes had lost their sleepy look. “Want me to take it on?”

“Later. Right now. I want you to take this visiting gentleman under your personal charge. Here is the name and the room and hotel where he is staying. He is to meet with the Secretary to-night—he knows where. You will get to him unobserved—absolutely unseen; I can leave that to you. Take him yourself to his appointment, and take him without a brass band. But have what men you want tail you and watch out

for spies.... Then, when he is through, bring him back and deliver him safely to his room. Compray?"

"Right—give me Wilkins and Smeed. I rather think I can get this bird there and back without being seen, but perhaps they may catch Allah keeping tabs on us at that." He laughed amusedly as he took the paper with the name and address.

A waiter with pencil and order-pad might have been seen some hours later going as if from the kitchen to the ninth floor of a Washington hotel. And the same waiter, a few minutes later, was escorting a guest from a rear service-door to an inconspicuous car parked nearby. The waiter slipped behind the wheel.

A taxi, whose driver was half asleep, was parked a hundred feet behind them at the curb. As they drove away and no other sign of life was seen in the quiet street the driver of the taxi yawned ostentatiously and decided to seek a new stand. He neglected possible fares until a man he called Smeed hailed him a block farther on. They followed slowly after the first car ...

and they trailed it again on its return after some hours.

“Safe as a church,” they reported to the driver of the first car. “We’ll swear that nobody was checking up on that trip.”

And: “O. K.” Delamater reported to his chief the next morning. “Put one over on this self-appointed Allah that time.”

But the Chief did not reply: he was looking at a slip of paper like those he had shown his operative the day before. He tossed it to Delamater and took up the phone.

“To the Secretary of State,” Delamater read. “You had your warning. Next time you disobey it shall be you who dies.”

The signature was only the image of an eye.

The Chief was calling a number; Delamater recognized it as that of the hotel he had visited. “Manager, please, at once,” the big man was saying.

He identified himself to the distant man. Then: “Please check up on the man in nine four seven. If he doesn’t answer, enter the room and report at once—I will hold the phone....”

The man at the desk tapped steadily with a pencil; Robert Delamater sat quietly, tensely waiting. But some sixth sense told him what the answer would be. He was not surprised when the Chief repeated what the phone had whispered.

“Dead?... Yes!... Leave everything absolutely undisturbed. We will be right over.”

“Get Doctor Brooks, Del,” he said quietly; “the Eye of Allah was watching after all.”

Robert Delamater was silent as they drove to the hotel. Where had he slipped? He trusted Smeed and Wilkins entirely; if they said his car had not been

followed it had not. And the visitor had been disguised; he had seen to that. Then, where had this person stood—this being who called himself the Eye of Allah?

“Chief,” he said finally. “I didn’t slip—nor Wilkins or Smeed.”

“Someone did,” replied the big man, “and it wasn’t the Eye of Allah, either.”

The manager of the hotel was waiting to take them to the room. He unlocked the door with his pass key.

“Not a thing touched,” he assured the Secret Service men; “there he is, just the way we found him.”

In the doorway between the bedroom and bath a body was huddled. Doctor Brooks knelt quickly beside it. His hands worked swiftly for a moment, then he rose to his feet.

“Dead,” he announced.



“How long?” asked the Chief.

“Some time. Hours I should say—perhaps eight or ten.”

“Cause?” the query was brief.

“It will take an autopsy to determine that. There is no blood or wound to be seen.”

The doctor was again examining the partly rigid body. He opened one hand; it held a cake of soap. There was a grease mark on the hand.

Delamater supplied the explanation. “He touched some grease on the old car I was using,” he said. “Must have gone directly to wash it off. See—there is water spilled on the floor.”

Water had indeed been splashed on the tile floor of the bath room; a pool of it still remained about the heavy, foreign-looking shoes of the dead man.

Something in it caught Delamater's eye. He leaned down to pick up three pellets of metal, like small shot, round and shining.

"I'll keep these," he said, "though the man was never killed with shot as small as that."

"We shall have to wait for the autopsy report," said the Chief crisply; "that may give the cause of death. Was there anyone in the room—did you enter it with him last night, Del?"

"No," said the operative; "he was very much agitated when we got here—dismissed me rather curtly at the door. He was quite upset about something—spoke English none too well and said something about a warning and damned our Secret Service as inefficient."

"A warning!" said the Chief. The dead man's brief case was on the bed. He crossed to it and undid the straps; the topmost paper told the reason for the man's disquiet. It showed the familiar, staring eye.

And beneath the eye was a warning: this man was to die if he did not leave Washington at once.

The Chief turned to the hotel manager. "Was the door locked?"

"Yes."

"But it is a spring lock. Someone could have gone out and closed it after him."

"Not this time. The dead-bolt was thrown. It takes a key to do that from the outside or this thumb-turn on the inside." The hotel man demonstrated the action of the heavy bolt.

"Then, with a duplicate key, a man could have left this room and locked the door behind him."

"Absolutely not. The floor-clerk was on duty all night. I have questioned her: this room was under her eyes all the time. She saw this man return, saw your man, here"—and he pointed to Delamater—"leave him at

the door. There was no person left the room after that.”

“See about the autopsy, Doctor,” the Chief ordered.

And to the manager: “Not a thing here must be touched. Admit only Mr. Delamater and no one else unless he vouches for them.

“Del,” he told the operative, “I’m giving you a chance to make up for last night. Go to it.”

And Robert Delamater “went to it” with all the thoroughness at his command, and with a total lack of result.

The autopsy helped not at all. The man was dead; it was apparently a natural death. “Not a scratch nor a mark on him,” was the report. But: “... next time it will be you,” the note with the staring eye had warned the Secretary of State. The writer of it was taking full credit for the mysterious death.

Robert Delamater had three small bits of metal, like tiny shot, and he racked his brain to connect these with the death. There were fingerprints, too, beautifully developed upon the mysterious missives—prints that tallied with none in the records. There were analyses of the paper—of the ink—and not a clue in any of them.

Just three pellets of metal. Robert Delamater had failed utterly, and he was bitter in the knowledge of his failure.

“He had you spotted, Del,” the Chief insisted. “The writer of these notes may be crazy, but he was clever enough to know that this man *did* see the Secretary. And he was waiting for him when he came back; then he killed him.”

“Without a mark?”

“He killed him,” the Chief repeated; “then he left—and that’s that.”

“But,” Delamater objected, “the room clerk—”

“—took a nap,” broke in the Chief. But Delamater could not be satisfied with the explanation.

“He got his, all right,” he conceded, “—got it in a locked room nine stories above the street, with no possible means of bringing it upon himself—and no way for the murderer to escape. I tell you there is something more to this: just the letter to the Secretary, as if this Eye of Allah were spying upon him—”

The Chief waved all that aside. “A clever spy,” he insisted. “Too clever for you. And a darn good guesser; he had us all fooled. But we’re dealing with a madman, not a ghost, and he didn’t sail in through a ninth story window nor go out through a locked door; neither did he spy on the Secretary of State in his private office. Don’t try to make a supernatural mystery out of a failure, Del.”

The big man’s words were tempered with a laugh, but there was an edge of sarcasm, ill-concealed.

And then came the next note. And the next. The letters were mailed at various points in and about the city; they came in a flood. And they were addressed to the President of the United States, to the Secretary of War—of the Navy—to all the Cabinet members. And all carried the same threat under the staring eye.

The United States, to this man, represented all that was tyrannical and oppressive to the downtrodden of the earth. He proposed to end it—this government first, then others in their turn. It was the outpouring of a wildly irrational mind that came to the office of the harassed Chief of the United States Secret Service, who had instructions to run this man down—this man who signed himself The Eye of Allah. And do it quickly for the notes were threatening. Official Washington, it seemed, was getting jumpy and was making caustic inquiries as to why a Secret Service department was maintained.

The Chief, himself, was directing the investigation—and getting nowhere.

“Here is the latest,” he said one morning. “Mailed at New York.” Delamater and a dozen other operatives were in his office: he showed them a letter printed like all the others. There was the eye, and beneath were words that made the readers catch their breath.

“The Eye of Allah sees—it has warned—now it will destroy. The day of judgment is at hand. The battleship *Maryland* is at anchor in the Hudson River at New York. No more shall it be the weapon of a despot government. It will be destroyed at twelve o’clock on September fifth.”

“Wild talk,” said the Chief, “but today is the fourth. The Commander of the *Maryland* has been warned—approach by air or water will be impossible. I want you men to patrol the shore and nail this man if he shows up. Lord knows what he intends—bluffing probably—but he may try some fool stunt. If he does—get him!”

Eleven-thirty by the watch on Robert Delamater’s wrist found him seated in the bow of a speed-boat the following morning. They patrolled slowly up and down



the shore. There were fellow operatives, he knew, scores of them, posted at all points of vantage along the docks.

Eleven forty-five—and the roar of seaplanes came from above where air patrols were-guarding the skies. Small boats drove back and forth on set courses; no curious sight-seeing craft could approach the *Maryland* that day. On board the battleship, too, there was activity apparent. A bugle sounded, and the warning of bellowing Klaxons echoed across the water. Here, in the peace and safety of the big port, the great man-of-war was sounding general quarters, and a scurry of running men showed for an instant on her decks. Anti-aircraft guns swung silently upon imaginary targets—

The watcher smiled at the absurdity of it all—this preparation to repel the attack of a wild-eyed writer of insane threats. And yet—and yet— He knew, too, there was apprehension in his frequent glances at his watch.

One minute to go! Delamater should have watched the shore. And, instead, he could not keep his eyes from the big fighting-ship silhouetted so clearly less than a mile away, motionless and waiting—waiting—for what? He saw the great turreted guns, useless against this puny, invisible opponent. Above them the fighting tops were gleaming. And above them—

Delamater shaded his eyes with a quick, tense hand: the tip of the mast was sparkling. There was a blue flash that glinted along the steel. It was gone to reappear on the fighting top itself—then lower.

What was it? the watching man was asking himself. What did it bring to mind? A street-car? A defective trolley? The zipping flash of a contact made and broken? That last!

Like the touch of a invisible wire, tremendously charged, a wire that touched and retreated, that made and lost its contact, the flashing arc was working toward the deck. It felt its way to the body of the ship; the arc was plain, starting from mid-air to hiss against the armored side; the arc shortened—

went to nothing—vanished.... A puff of smoke from an open port proved its presence inside. Delamater had the conviction that a deadly something had gone through the ship's side—was insulated from it—was searching with its blazing, arcing end for the ammunition rooms....

The realization of that creeping menace came to Delamater with a gripping, numbing horror. The seconds were almost endless as he waited. Slowly, before his terrified eyes, the deck of the great ship bulged upward ... slowly it rolled and tore apart ... a mammoth turret with sixteen-inch guns was lifting unhurriedly into the air ... there were bodies of men rocketing skyward....

The mind of the man was racing at lightning speed, and the havoc before him seemed more horrible in its slow, leisurely progress. If he could only move—do something!

The shock of the blasted air struck him sprawling into the bottom of the boat; the listener was hammered almost to numbness by the deafening thunder that

battered and tore through the still air. At top speed the helmsman drove for the shelter of a hidden cove. They made it an instant before the great waves struck high upon the sand spit. Over the bay hung a ballooning cloud of black and gray—lifting for an instant to show in stark ghastliness the wreckage, broken and twisted, that marked where the battleship *Maryland* rested in the mud in the harbor of New York.

The eyes of the Secret-Service men were filled with the indelible impress of what they had seen. Again and again, before him, came the vision of a ship full of men in horrible, slow disintegration; his mind was numbed and his actions and reactions were largely automatic. But somehow he found himself in the roar of the subway, and later he sat in a chair and knew he was in a Pullman of a Washington train.

He rode for hours in preoccupied silence, his gaze fixed unseeingly, striving to reach out and out to some distant, unknown something which he was trying to visualize. But he looked at intervals at his hand that held three metal pellets.

He was groping for the mental sequence which would bring the few known facts together and indicate their cause. A threat—a seeming spying within a closed and secret room—the murder on the ninth floor, a murder without trace of wound or weapon. Weapon! He stared again at the tangible evidence he held; then shook his head in perplexed abstraction. No—the man was killed by unknown means.

And now—the *Maryland*! And a visible finger of death—touching, flashing, feeling its way to the deadly cargo of powder sacks.

Not till he sat alone with his chief did he put into words his thoughts.

“A time bomb did it,” the Chief was saying. “The officials deny it, but what other answer is there? No one approached that ship—you know that, Del—no torpedo nor aerial bomb! Nothing as fanciful as that!”

Robert Delamater’s lips formed a wry smile. “Nothing at fanciful as that”—and he was thinking, thinking—of what he hardly dared express.

“We will start with the ship’s personnel,” the other continued; “find every man who was not on board when the explosion occurred—”

“No use,” the operative interrupted; “this was no inside job, Chief.” He paused to choose his words while the other watched him curiously.

“Someone *did* reach that ship—reached it from a distance—reached it in the same way they reached that poor devil I left at room nine forty-seven. Listen —”

He told his superior of his vigil on the speed-boat—of the almost invisible flash against the ship’s mast. “He reached it, Chief,” he concluded; “he felt or saw his way down and through the side of that ship. And he fired their ammunition from God knows where.”

“I wonder,” said the big man slowly; “I wonder if you know just what you are trying to tell me—just how absurd your idea is. Are you seriously hinting at long-distance vision through solid armor-plate—through

these walls of stone and steel? And wireless power-transmission through the same wall—!”

“Exactly!” said the operative.

“Why, Del, you must be as crazy as this Eye of Allah individual. It’s impossible.”

“That word,” said Delamater, quietly, “has been crossed out of scientific books in the past few years.”

“What do you mean?”

“You have studied some physical science, of course?” Delamater asked. The Chief nodded.

“Then you know what I mean. I mean that up to recent years science had all the possibilities and impossibilities neatly divided and catalogued. Ignorance, as always, was the best basis for positive assurance. Then they got inside the atom. And since then your real scientist has been a very humble man. He has seen the impossibility of yesterday become the established fact of to-day.”

The Chief of the United States Secret Service was tapping with nervous irritation on the desk before him.

“Yes, yes!” he agreed, and again he looked oddly at his operative. “Perhaps there is something to that; you work along that line, Del: you can have a free hand. Take a few days off, a little vacation if you wish. Yes—and ask Sprague to step in from the other office; he has the personnel list.”

Robert Delamater felt the other’s eyes follow him as he left the room. “And that about lets me out,” he told himself; “he thinks I’ve gone cuckoo, now.”

He stopped in a corridor; his fingers, fumbling in a vest pocket, had touched the little metal spheres. Again his mind flashed back to the chain of events he had linked together. He turned toward an inner office.

“I would like to see Doctor Brooks,” he said. And when the physician appeared: “About that man who was murdered at the hotel, Doctor—”



“Who died,” the doctor corrected; “we found no evidence of murder.”

“Who was murdered,” the operative insisted. “Have you his clothing where I can examine it?”

“Sure,” agreed the physician. He led Delamater to another room and brought out a box of the dead man’s effects.

“But if it’s murder you expect to prove you’ll find no help in this.”

The Secret Service man nodded. “I’ll look them over, just the same,” he said. “Thanks.”

Alone in the room, he went over the clothing piece by piece. Again he examined each garment, each pocket, the lining, as he had done before when first he took the case. Metal, he thought, he must find metal.

But only when a heavy shoe was in his hands did the anxious frown relax from about his eyes.

“Of course,” he whispered, half aloud. “What a fool I was! I should have thought of that.”

The soles of the shoes were sewed, but, beside the stitches were metal specks, where cobbler’s nails were driven. And in the sole of one shoe were three tiny holes.

“Melted!” he said exultantly. “Crazy, am I, Chief? This man was standing on a wet floor; he made a perfect ground. And he got a jolt that melted these nails when it flashed out of him.”

He wrapped the clothing carefully and replaced it in the box. And he fingered the metal pellets in his pocket as he slipped quietly from the room.

He did not stop to talk with Doctor Brooks; he wanted to think, to ponder upon the incredible proof of the theory he had hardly dared believe. The Eye of Allah—the maniac—was real; and his power for evil! There was work to be done, and the point of beginning was not plain.

How far did the invisible arm reach? How far could the Eye of Allah see? Where was the generator—the origin of this wireless power; along what channel did it flow? A ray of lightless light—an unseen ethereal vibration.... Delamater could only guess at the answers.

The current to kill a man or to flash a spark into silken powder bags need not be heavy, he knew. Five hundred—a thousand volts—if the mysterious conductor carried it without resistance and without loss. People had been killed by house-lighting currents—a mere 110 volts—when conditions were right. There would be no peculiar or unusual demand upon the power company to point him toward the hidden maniac.

He tossed restlessly throughout the night, and morning brought no answer to his repeated questions. But it brought a hurry call from his Chief.

“Right away,” was the instruction; “don’t lose a minute. Come to the office.”

He found the big man at his desk. He was quiet, unhurried, but the operative knew at a glance the tense repression that was being exercised—the iron control of nerves that demanded action and found incompetence and helplessness instead.

“I don’t believe your fantastic theories,” he told Delamater. “Impractical—impossible! But—” He handed the waiting man a paper. “We must not leave a stone unturned.”

Delamater said nothing; he looked at the paper in his hand. “To the President of the United States,” he read. “Prepare to meet your God. Friday. The eighth. Twelve o’clock.”

The signature he hardly saw; the staring, open eye was all too familiar.

“That is to-morrow,” said Delamater softly. “The President dies to-morrow.”

“No!” exploded the Chief. “Do you realize what that means? The President murdered—more killings to

follow—and the killer unknown! Why the country will be in a panic: the whole structure of the Government is threatened!”

He paused, then added as he struck his open hand upon the desk: “I will have every available man at the White House.”

“For witnesses?” asked Delamater coldly.

The big man stared at his operative; the lines of his face were sagging.

“Do you believe—really—he can strike him down—at his desk—from a distance?”

“I know it.” Delamater’s fingers played for a moment with three bits of metal in his pocket. Unconsciously he voiced his thoughts: “Does the President have nails in his shoes, I wonder?”

“What—what’s that?” the Chief demanded.

But Delamater made no reply. He was picturing the President. He would be seated at his desk, waiting, waiting ... and the bells would be ringing and whistles blowing from distant shops when the bolt would strike.... It would flash from his feet ... through the thick rug ... through the rug.... It would have to ground.

He paid no heed to his Chief's repeated question. He was seeing, not the rug in the Presidential office, but below it—underneath it—a heavy pad of rubber.

“If he can be insulated—” he said aloud, and stared unseeingly at his eagerly listening superiors—“even the telephone cut—no possible connection with the ground—”

“For God's sake, Del, if you've got an idea—any hope at all! I'm—I'm up against it, Del.”

The operative brought his distant gaze back to the room and the man across from him. “Yes,” he said slowly, thoughtfully, “I've got the beginning of an idea; I don't see the end of it yet.

“We can cut him off from the ground—the President, I mean—make an insulated island where he sits. But this devil will get him the instant he leaves ... unless ... unless....”

“Yes—yes?” The Chief’s voice was high-pitched with anxious impatience; for the first time he was admitting to himself his complete helplessness in this emergency.

“Unless,” said Delamater, as the idea grew and took shape, “unless that wireless channel works both ways. If it does ... if it does....”

The big man made a gesture of complete incomprehension.

“Wait!” said Robert Delamater, sharply. If ever his sleepy indolence had misled his Chief, there was none to do so now in the voice that rang like cold steel. His eyes were slits under the deep-drawn brows, and his mouth was one straight line.

To the hunter there is no greater game than man. And Robert Delamater, man-hunter, had his treacherous quarry in sight. He fired staccato questions at his Chief.

“Is the President at his desk at twelve?”

“Yes.”

“Does he know—about this?”

“Yes.”

“Does he know it means death?”

The Chief nodded.

“I see a way—a chance,” said the operative. “Do I get a free hand?”

“Yes—Good Lord, yes! If there’s any chance of—”

Delamater silenced him. “I’ll be the one to take the chance,” he said grimly. “Chief, I intend to impersonate the President.”



“Now listen— The President and I are about the same build. I know a man who can take care of the make-up; he will get me by anything but a close inspection. This Eye of Allah, up to now, has worked only in the light. We’ll have to gamble on that and work our change in the dark.

“The President must go to bed as usual—impress upon him that he may be under constant surveillance. Then, in the night, he leaves—

“Oh, I know he won’t want to hide himself, but he must. That’s up to you.

“Arrange for me to go to his room before daylight. From that minute on I am the President. Get me his routine for that morning; I must follow it so as to arouse no least suspicion.”

“But I don’t see—” began the Chief. “You will impersonate him—yes—but what then? You will be killed if this maniac makes good. Is the President of the United States to be a fugitive? Is—”

“Hold on, hold on!” said Delamater. He leaned back in his chair; his face relaxed to a smile, then a laugh.

“I’ve got it all now. Perhaps it will work. If not—” A shrug of the shoulders completed the thought. “And I have been shooting it to you pretty fast haven’t I! Now here is the idea—

“I must be in the President’s chair at noon. This Allah person will be watching in, so I must be acting the part all morning. I will have the heaviest insulation I can get under the rug, and I’ll have something to take the shot instead of myself. And perhaps, perhaps I will send a message back to the Eye of Allah that will be a surprise.

“Is it a bet?” he asked. “Remember, I’m taking the chance—unless you know some better way—”

The Chief’s chair came down with a bang. “We’ll gamble on it, Del,” he said; “we’ve got to—there is no other way.... And now what do you want?”

“A note to the White House electrician,” said Robert Delamater, “and full authority to ask for anything I may need, from the U. S. Treasury down to a pair of wire-cutters.”

His smile had become contagious; the Chief’s anxious look relaxed. “If you pull this off, Del, they may give you the Treasury or the Mint at that. But remember, republics are notoriously ungenerous.”

“We’ll have to gamble on that, too,” said Robert Delamater.

The heart of the Nation is Washington. Some, there are, who would have us feel that New York rules our lives. Chicago—San Francisco—these and other great cities sometimes forget that they are mere ganglia on the financial and commercial nervous system. The heart is Washington, and, Congress to the contrary notwithstanding, the heart of that heart is not the domed building at the head of Pennsylvania Avenue, but an American home. A simple, gracious mansion, standing in quiet dignity and whiteness above its velvet lawns.

It is the White House that draws most strongly at the interest and curiosity of the homely, common throng that visits the capital.

But there were no casual visitors at the White House on the seventh of September. Certain Senators, even, were denied admittance. The President was seeing only the members of the Cabinet and some few others.

It is given to a Secret Service operative, in his time, to play many parts. But even a versatile actor might pause at impersonating a President. Robert Delamater was acting the role with never a fumble. He sat, this new Robert Delamater, so startlingly like the Chief Executive, in the chair by a flat top desk. And he worked diligently at a mass of correspondence.

Secretaries came and went; files were brought. Occasionally he replied to a telephone call—or perhaps called someone. It would be hard to say which happened, for no telephone bells rang.

On the desk was a schedule that Delamater consulted. So much time for correspondence—so many minutes for a conference with this or that official, men who were warned to play up to this new Chief Executive as if the life of their real President were at stake.

To any observer the busy routine of the morning must have passed with never a break. And there was an observer, as Delamater knew. He had wondered if the mystic ray might carry electrons that would prove its presence. And now he knew.

The Chief of the U. S. Secret Service had come for a consultation with the President. And whatever lingering doubts may have stifled his reluctant imagination were dispelled when the figure at the desk opened a drawer.

“Notice this,” he told the Chief as he appeared to search for a paper in the desk. “An electroscope; I put it in here last night. It is discharging. The ray has been on since nine-thirty. No current to electrocute me—just a penetrating ray.”

He returned the paper to the drawer and closed it.

“So that is that,” he said, and picked up a document to which he called the visitor’s attention.

“Just acting,” he explained. “The audience may be critical; we must try to give them a good show! And now give me a report. What are you doing? Has anything else turned up? I am counting on you to stand by and see that that electrician is on his toes at twelve o’clock.”

“Stand by is right,” the Chief agreed; “that’s about all we can do. I have twenty men in and about the grounds—there will be as many more later on. And I know now just how little use we are to you, Del.”

“Your expression!” warned Delamater. “Remember you are talking to the President. Very official and all that.”

“Right! But now tell me what is the game, Del. If that devil fails to knock you out here where you are safe, he will get you when you leave the room.”

“Perhaps,” agreed the pseudo-executive, “and again, perhaps not. He won’t get me here; I am sure of that. They have this part of the room insulated. The phone wire is cut—my conversations there are all faked.

“There is only one spot in this room where that current can pass. A heavy cable is grounded outside in wet earth. It comes to a copper plate on this desk; you can’t see it—it is under those papers.”

“And if the current comes—” began the visitor.

“When it comes,” the other corrected, “it will jump to that plate and go off harmlessly—I hope.”

“And then what? How does that let you out?”

“Then we will see,” said the presidential figure. “And you’ve been here long enough, Chief. Send in the President’s secretary as you go out.”

“He arose to place a friendly, patronizing hand on the other’s shoulder.

“Good-by,” he said, “and watch that electrician at twelve. He is to throw the big switch when I call.”

“Good luck,” said the big man huskily. “We’ve got to hand it to you, Del; you’re—”

“Good-by!” The figure of the Chief Executive turned abruptly to his desk.

There was more careful acting—another conference—some dictating. The clock on the desk gave the time as eleven fifty-five. The man before the flat topped desk verified it by a surreptitious glance at his watch. He dismissed the secretary and busied himself with some personal writing.

Eleven fifty-nine—and he pushed paper and pen aside. The movement disturbed some other papers, neatly stacked. They were dislodged, and where they had lain was a disk of dull copper.

“Ready,” the man called softly. “Don’t stand too near that line.” The first boom of noonday bells came faintly to the room.



The President—to all but the other actors in the morning's drama—leaned far back in his chair. The room was suddenly deathly still. The faint ticking of the desk clock was loud and rasping. There was heavy breathing audible in the room beyond. The last noonday chime had died away....

The man at the desk was waiting—waiting. And he thought he was prepared, nerves steeled, for the expected. But he jerked back, to fall with the overturned chair upon the soft, thick-padded rug, at the ripping, crackling hiss that tore through the silent room.

From a point above the desk a blue arc flamed and wavered. Its unseen terminal moved erratically in the air, but the other end of the deadly flame held steady upon a glowing, copper disc.

Delamater, prone on the floor, saw the wavering point that marked the end of the invisible carrier of the current—saw it drift aside till the blue arc was broken. It returned, and the arc crashed again into

blinding flame. Then, as abruptly, the blue menace vanished.

The man on the floor waited, waited, and tried to hold fast to some sense of time.

Then: "Contact!" he shouted. "The switch! Close the switch!"

"Closed!" came the answer from a distant room. There was a shouted warning to unseen men: "Stand back there—back—there's twenty thousand volts on that line—"

Again the silence....

"Would it work? Would it?" Delamater's mind was full of delirious, half-thought hopes. That fiend in some far-off room had cut the current meant as a death-bolt to the Nation's' head. He would leave the ray on—look along it to gloat over his easy victory. His generator must be insulated: would he touch it with his hand, now that his own current was off?—make of himself a conductor?

In the air overhead formed a terrible arc.

From the floor, Delamater saw it rip crashingly into life as twenty thousand volts bridged the gap of a foot or less to the invisible ray. It hissed tremendously in the stillness....

And Delamater suddenly buried his face in his hands. For in his mind he was seeing a rigid, searing body, and in his nostrils, acrid, distinct, was the smell of burning flesh.

“Don’t be a fool,” he told himself fiercely. “Don’t be a fool! Imagination!”

The light was out.

“Switch off!” a voice was calling. There was a rush of swift feet from the distant doors; friendly hands were under him—lifting him—as the room, for Robert Delamater, President-in-name of the United States, turned whirlingly, dizzily black....

Robert Delamater, U. S. Secret Service operative, entered the office of his Chief. Two days of enforced idleness and quiet had been all he could stand. He laid a folded newspaper before the smiling, welcoming man.

“That’s it, I suppose,” he said, and pointed to a short notice.

“X-ray Operator Killed,” was the caption. “Found Dead in Office in Watts Building.” He had read the brief item many times.

“That’s what we let the reporters have,” said the Chief.

“Was he”—the operative hesitated for a moment—“pretty well fried?”

“Quite!”

“And the machine?”

“Broken glass and melted metal. He smashed it as he fell.”

“The Eye of Allah,” mused Delamater. “Poor devil—poor, crazy devil. Well, we gambled—and we won. How about the rest of the bet? Do I get the Mint?”

“Hell, no!” said the Chief. “Do you expect to win all the time? They want to know why it took us so long to get him.

“Now, there’s a little matter out in Ohio, Del, that we’ll have to get after—”